

Chancellor's Community Forum
5 Year Plan
November 12, 2008
Patterson ES
6:30 pm – 8:00 pm
Erin McGoldrick

The notes below reflect our effort to summarize the comments, questions and concerns expressed at each meeting. They are not recorded verbatim and should not be considered direct quotations.

Overview: Parents, teachers, and community members joined together to ask questions of the Chancellor and Erin McGoldrick, Chief of Data and Accountability. Parents and teachers were specifically concerned about safety, maintenance issues, and oversized classes. Additionally the Chancellor responded to these concerns highlighting that funding will be an issue for the rest of the school year. Lastly, Erin McGoldrick fielded responses and suggestions to how we can improve the plan and communication with the community. Community members suggested collaboration between important decision makers as a key component along with providing summaries and notes from the forums in paper form.

Keywords: after-care, safety, DC Teaching Fellows, budget, after-school programs, special education, wrap around services, full-service model, enrollment, inclusion, school wide application model

Presenter/ Moderator: Abigail Smith, Chief of Transformation Management
Michelle Rhee, Chancellor

Panelists: Erin McGoldrick, Chief of Data & Accountability

Other DCPS Staff: Lindsey Rattray, Project Assistant, Human Capital

Codes

MR = Michelle Rhee, Chancellor

AS = Abigail Smith, Chief of Transformation Management

EM = Erin McGoldrick

CM = Community Member

Notes:

EM: *What part of this plan matches your vision of what a great plan should look like?*

CM: All pieces are necessary. However, there should be additional wording surrounding real collaboration, especially surrounding the adult population who do the job and raise student achievement. Full collaboration is important, rather than solely cooperation.

CM: We need great people, which means great teachers.

CM: *Should I be pushing the new teachers into Teach For America (TFA) or the Teaching Fellows program?*

MR: The idea of a **teacher fellow** is that you are making the career change into the profession – it is not a two year program. Lots of TFA corps members pursue other fields [rather than teaching] when their two year commitment is fulfilled. **DC Teaching Fellows** recruits career changers who go through certification program, and additionally there is financial assistance and training. This program has proven very effective in areas of high needs subject areas. Encourage people who are coming from other fields to think about the **Teaching Fellows** program.

CM: *Is it run throughout the city?*

MR: **DC Teaching Fellows** is broader than TFA and is heavily focused on career changers.

CM: *Can you talk about supplemental service providers for NCLB?*

MR: We will get your info, specifically the timeline for service providers.

CM: There is a difference between parents who are motivated versus those less motivated. *Is there a creative way that we can reward parents and encourage them to enroll their students in DCPS?*

MR: The enrollment issue is based on parents who actively choose to send their kids to other schools (private or charter). These, who are making the choices to send their kids elsewhere, are parents who are engaged and making decisions that are best for their kids.

CM: The merge at Patterson is a sight for sore eyes. My daughter is a 3rd grade student here. She has 27 kids in her class and she is not getting what she can out of her class. I have three questions: *Is there going to be a change with class size? After-care is a concern. Other public schools receive free childcare, is this based on family income? Safety* is another concern, it seems as if there is no procedure, *how can we ensure that children are not picked up by random outsiders?*

MR: **Safety** – every school has a safety plan and an officer who is assigned to school and is responsible for signing visitors in and out. Every school has a protocol for who picks students up, if there is a breach in protocol alert the school administrators and my office so that we can ensure this doesn't happen again. Additionally, letters go out that say who can pick up my child. **After care** – for years DCPS was misusing monies coming in for **after care**, we are only allowed to subsidize students who fall below a specific income level. Some programs are at no cost through Department of Parks and

Recreation yet these programs don't always have capacity to expand. Our long term goal is to have **after school programs** at every school, ideally at no cost, but we are not in position to do that right now. In regards to merger and class size – we identified Patterson as over enrolled so we used a budgeting process based on the number of students we were anticipating. Last week we had a Hiring Fair, but I am unsure if we have someone coming in here or not. The WTU contract lays out exceptions to over **enrollments** and **budget** is an issue that comes into play. We are trying to protect the **budget** and at this time we cannot add more teachers. I understand your concerns because I am a parent and worry about one-on-one needs for your child. We will check into Patterson to see if additional staff was hired. If not, we are working with administrators so that additional staff [already in the school] can go into the classroom and work with smaller groups.

CM: I am at Theodore Roosevelt where there are 40 students in classroom and a problem with a wall. *Are you aware of our wall situation?*

MR: Yes, and Roosevelt needs to be modernized. We have a list of things that we need to fix, but we will also check for you.

CM: *Do you plan to have workshops for teachers within the general education population and **special education** population about inclusion?* We need a lot of training and need workshops for **inclusion**. Some teachers do not want **Special Education** teachers in their classrooms.

EM: We are using an **inclusion model** to instruct all students in one classroom called the **school wide application model**. This model is currently at eight elementary schools, and we are looking at expanding this model and the need to support teachers. We understand that adults need to collaborate. We also have a **Full Service model** in eight middle schools and **wrap around services** to meet **special education** needs of students. One additional need is in regards to an over-identification of students who are labeled as **Special Education**, because we cannot provide early interventions around behavior supports. We have two approaches so that we are addressing needs, and we are also looking at the pilot year to see if we should be expanding these programs. We understand the crisis with **Special Education**.

CM: Quality instruction and rigorous teaching and learning is very difficult and we are set up to fail because we are not getting support, especially with schools that have large class sizes. *How can we facilitate this achievement when we are dealing with this pressure and how can we obtain the appropriate support?* Additionally, I see the important initiatives in the Performance Plan as 1.2 and 1.3 (making it safe) and the reason there is dropping enrollment is because parents are not feeling safe.

EM: We also need to be thoughtful about distribution because we have limited resources. Let's talk about how to engage the community. *Are there other ways in how we can offer feedback and partnership?*

CM: My son's school is using robocalls. This is very effective because it is constant, it works for me. They call regularly.

CM: We need to go back to church and community activist groups. Engage these groups so they in turn go back and engage their troops. Additionally use radio, TV, and newspapers as different mediums and as a way to involve the community.

CM: Educational aides are being contracted out to Delta T. Self-contained program is a revolving door, they work for \$11 an hour but most people who take this position with a degree are not going to stay. Therefore, this situation is creating a lack of support with teachers, because aides are helpful but then leave shortly thereafter.

EM: We need to be more thoughtful about instructional aides and funding.

CM: *Do you provide notes in paper form?* Because parents do not have computers. Use different modes and create a newsletter based off of forum notes.

CM: Substitute teachers are a waste of money and waste of time.

EM: Teachers are supposed to provide lesson plans for their substitutes, and when we have a high rate of absenteeism, substitutes should have lesson plans from the teacher, so that the students do not suffer.

EM: *Other thoughts or comments?* Jot them down on blue sheets and if you have other question please ask. We appreciate you coming out to invest in what we are doing in our district.